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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

MONDAY, December 29, 1941

Subject: "CARE OF HOUSEHOLD METALS." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

One way to help yourself--and your country in its war effort--is to look after the precious metals in your home. And there's more to that than hiding gold, or silver, or platinum from the burglar. Many metals are precious these days. Aluminum, copper, steel, tin and others you've always thought of as "common and everyday" now belong on the "precious" list. As war needs take more metal, less metal goes into household equipment. So for your own sake and for your country's sake, guard the metal you have by giving it the care that will make it last.

Down through the years countless kettles and pans and other metal household articles have gone to an untimely end on the trash heap. Take a glance at some of these sad examples of careless waste. Here's a kettle left forgotten on the stove until the food in it burned and ruined the bottom. Here's a pan, dented and leaky from knocking about in a drawer with a lot of heavy utensils or from rough dishwashing. Here's a frying pan warped out of shape because cold water was poured in it when it was hot. Lots of iron and steel utensils here have been ruined by rust. Others are scratched, scraped and spoiled by wrong cleaning.

Well, those are just a few of the pitiful cases that have gone on the scrap heap. Let's consider now how to avoid such needless waste.

Handle gently is a good rule for all metal pieces. Some metals will take considerable rough handling, but none improves by it. Many metals dent and scratch very easily, so don't drop metal articles or bang them about in the kitchen. Hang each kettle and pot on its own special peg in the kitchen, or give each one its

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separate place on a shelf. Egg beaters, and all small kitchen tools, and especially steel knives need a place of their own. Iron utensils need a dry place. Another tip: You can wash in hot suds of mild soap practically every metal you use in cooking, iron included. Exceptions are electrical utensils where the "element" must never get into water. Clean these by wiping the outside with a damp cloth.

Metal pieces that don't need regular washing, such as electric fixtures and metal furniture, you can protect from rust, tarnish and stain by coating with clear lacquer.

Now about special care needed by different metals. Let's begin with aluminum. Points to remember about this metal are: alkali darkens and pits it; acid brightens it; and thin aluminum dents easily. Since alkali darkens aluminum, avoid strong soap, or scouring powder, or soda. Brighten discolored aluminum by scouring with very fine steel wool, or with paste of whiting powder and vinegar. You can brighten the inside of an aluminum pan by cooking acid food in it like tomatoes, or tart apples, or buttermilk. But don't leave food standing in aluminum. The food may act on the metal and make little pits in it. Clean decorative aluminum articles, like trays or bowls, with whiting or a good silver polish. Steel wool may scratch the finely polished surface.

What to do if unfortunately you scorch food in an aluminum pan? Pour in water and boil long enough to loosen the burned food. Then scrape off what you can with a wooden spoon, never with a sharp utensil. Last of all, scour with fine steel wool and wash in soapy water.

Copper is harder metal than aluminum, but, just the same, you can easily dent a copper bowl or pitcher by dropping it on the floor, or ramming it in a drawer. You can brighten both copper and brass with mild acid and salt. Old-fashioned "cleaners" for copper and brass are lemon juice and salt, vinegar and





salt, or hot buttermilk. Always wash and dry the metal well after cleaning.

Now some tips about tin. Never try to shine tin pans or other articles of tin. If you scour tin, you're likely to take the tin covering off the metal underneath and leave it open to rust. Besides, darkened tin absorbs heat better, so bakes better than shiny tin which reflects heat. To remove burned food from tin, fill the pan with water containing soda, and heat for a few minutes. Then wash thoroughly with soap and water. Be sure to dry tin thoroughly. Water left on may cause any scratched or worn places to rust. Keep tin utensils in a dry place.

Now a note on one of the newer metals - chromium - used a good deal today in plumbing fixtures, metal furniture, serving dishes, and electrical appliances. Chromium is such a soft metal you can easily rub off a chromium finish by scouring. Never use metal polishes or even cleaning powder on chromium. Just wash it in soapy water, rinse and rub dry with a soft cloth. Or just wipe it with a damp cloth. Chromium itself won't rust. But if you scour off a chromium surface, the metal underneath will rust.

Speaking of rust suggests iron. Rust is the big problem with all iron utensils--and all steel, too, except stainless steel. When you wash iron utensils, be sure to dry them very thoroughly and keep them in a dry place. Remember that salt absorbs moisture, and moisture rusts iron. So don't leave salt in or around iron utensils. If you store iron utensils away for a time, cover them with fat containing no salt, fresh lard, for example, or sweet oil. You can use kerosene oil to protect a camp stove, or the outside of an iron frying pan. Remove rust by scouring with steel wool, a copper scouring ball, or cleaning powder. As for stainless steel, wash that in hot soapy water, rinse and dry it. Scour it where necessary with very fine steel wool or cleaning powder.

These are the little ways you can save the precious metals in your home.

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